

Jesus Christ Is God

Reprinted from "Les Dossiers de l'Action Populaire."

CAN one really ignore the person of Christ? No. It is a fact—He is met everywhere:

He dominates our cities by His cathedrals, our tiniest hamlets by His churches; on His cross with arms extended He blesses us at every turn in our travelings. The calendar of the free-thinker, like that of the believer recalls each day the distinctive events of His life and the name of His saints. The very masterpieces of our museums speak of Him.

Jesus Christ acts like a mysterious lover. Multitudes follow Him. He is dead more than 2,000 years, and yet, more than 300 million souls still cling to Him. The cultured proclaim Him each year in greater numbers, the students in our schools of learning join the ranks of Him whom they call "Master."

Yes, the lowly carpenter of the insignificant village of Nazareth still stands at the parting of the ways of the centuries, He fills the world, and exercises always His sway over the noblest souls.

Why? What then is this man?

I. *He was foretold as God.*

Alone, centuries before birth, Jesus Christ lived in the soul of a people. In fact:

1° HIS MISSION

(a) *Was prepared by the Hebrew people:*

Violently attacked for long periods at a time, swallowed up again in the midst of pagan nations in the midst of corruption, this people kept its absolutely untarnished faith in one God.

Renan himself proclaims it to be a unique fact, and the celebrated rationalist Gunkel admits it is "a veritable prodigy." The explanation of this fact is that God protected His people as a stem upon which was to grow a marvelous flower: Christ, who would graft His doctrine on

the monotheism of the Jews. This is so true that the mission of the Messiah.

(b) *Was foretold by the prophets:*

Unceasingly they directed the minds of the people to the coming of the Envoy (the one sent, *Missus*) and with remarkable detail foretold the future work

—*as redemptive*: "He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His bruises we are healed" (Isaias liii, 5).

—*as universal*: "All the ends of the earth shall remember, and shall be converted to the Lord: and all the kindreds of the Gentiles shall adore in his sight" (Ps. xxi, 28).

It is clear that there is question here of a King of souls who is to suffer and make reparation, but the earthly spirit of the Jews obstinately looked for a temporal and glorious King.

There is question, too, of a Kingdom that will embrace Jews and pagans, but the Jews despised pagans and could conceive only of a religion belonging exclusively to their nation. Who could grant to the prophets a vision contradicting the conceptions of their whole environment? God alone.

Nor is this all. The prophets were bolder still. They foretold in detail.

2° HIS LIFE

(a) *Infancy:*

Isaias declares He will be born of the tribe of Juda; he sees the Infant in His crib; Micheas designates Bethlehem; David sees the Magi; Osee foresees the exile into Egypt and Jeremias the slaughter of the innocents.

(b) *Public life, death and resurrection:*

Isaias enumerates His miracles. "None of the particulars of the Passion escapes them: the ass and the foal for the Palm-Sunday celebration (Zacharias); the treason and kiss of Judas (David); the thirty pieces of silver (Zacharias); the revilings and the spittle (Isaias); the pierced hands and feet; the Resurrection (David)."

(c) *The dates:*

"They knew even the dates: 'The scepter shall not be taken away from Juda'; Jacob had said. 'When the second temple shall be rebuilt' Aggeus and Malachy add; and

Daniel counts the number of years five centuries in advance." (Mgr. L. Andrieux.)

Let it be admitted we have from witnesses open to the least suspicion, the Jews, a detailed life of Jesus written four or five hundred years or more before His birth.

The conclusion is inevitable: It is God who "spoke through the prophets."

Prepared for, announced in His work and in His life, Jesus Christ is truly

THE ENVOY OF GOD

and He was an envoy of superhuman stature, for

II. *He lived as God.*

Let us open the Gospel and see:

1. *He speaks as God.*

"He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me." "You have heard that it was said to them of old [Jesus speaks of the law given by God to Moses] . . . and I say to you." He absolves sins in His own name (Lk. vii, 36-50); He who sacrifices all for Him "will have eternal life." He Himself will share in the last judgment (Mk. viii, 38).

To speak thus, one must be more than man. In fact:

2. *Jesus declares Himself God.*

Jesus lets it be clearly understood (Mt. xxii, 41) that He is Lord of the great king, David. To place Himself thus above the most illustrious king, is this not to make one's self God? And so in the course of the Passion the high priest cries out: "But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest said to him: I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us if thou be the Christ the Son of God. Jesus saith to him: Thou hast said it. Nevertheless I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his garments, saying: He hath blasphemed; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold now you have heard the blasphemy: What think you? But they answering, said: He is guilty of death" (Mt. xxvi, 63-66).

If He is accused of blasphemy it is because He declares Himself God. But ought we to believe Him? Yes, for

3° *His Holiness is a guaranty of His words.*

He is proclaimed just. Judas himself, His daily companion cries out: "I have sinned in betraying the innocent blood." What a witness! The wife of Pilate sends word: "Have thou nothing to do with that just man."

He proclaims Himself without sin. "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her," says Jesus of other men (John viii, 7). But speaking of Himself, He hurls at the Jews, who searched His life with their merciless eyes: "Which of you shall convince Me of sin?" What unassailable virtue!

He has a horror of deceit. Jesus denounces ruthlessly the hypocrisy of the Pharisees "whitened sepulchers." He scourges the merchants from the temple. He is all loyalty, all truth.

Could one hesitate to believe Him when with an impressive calm He declares Himself God, though thoroughly convinced that He is condemning Himself to death.

No such a man does not lie!

For the rest the assertions of Jesus

4° *Are confirmed by His miracles.*

A miracle, a clearly written signature of God, signs each page of His life. The blind, lame and leprous; those sick from all sorts of disease regain light and health. Nay more. He raises the dead:

One recently dead (the daughter of Jairus): "She is not dead, but sleepeth," says Jesus and they ridicule Him . . . Jesus takes her hand and she arises (Mk. v, 42).

A dead person brought to the cemetery: The funeral procession of the only son of a widow has already gone out from Naim. Jesus cries out: "Young man, I say to you arise and walk." The dead man sits up and begins to talk (Lk. vii, 16).

One dead and buried: Lazarus has been dead four days. "By this time he stinketh already." But Jesus commanded: "Lazarus come forth." And Lazarus comes forth alive (Jn. xi).

Such miracles show clearly the intervention of God. But Jesus uses them to support His doctrine; therefore, the responsibility of God is involved. That is decisive. God, being unable to lend His aid to a liar, to a blasphemer, endorses the affirmation of Jesus. No further room for doubt!

"Truly this man is the Son of God."

And lo now the greatest miracle of all:

III. *He arose from the dead as God.*

The Gospel story is unequivocal.

1° *Jesus had foretold His resurrection, as a sign of His Divine mission.*

At Jerusalem He would suffer much, would be delivered to the chiefs of the priests and scribes, condemned to death, delivered to the pagans to be mocked, scourged and crucified; on the third day He would rise (Mt. xvi, 21).

He replied to the Jews who asked of Him a sign confirming the authority He claimed: "As Jonas was in the whale's belly three days and three nights, so shall the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights" (Mt. xii, 40).

This was so clear that even His enemies understood it.

One the eve of the Passion, they came to Pilate: "Sir we have remembered that that seducer said while He was yet alive: 'After three days I will rise again. Command therefore, the sepulcher to be guarded until the third day'" (Mt. xxviii, 63).

It was so marvelous that even His disciples dared not believe:

"To rise from the dead." What could these words mean, they asked among themselves? (Mk. ix, 18.)

After His death—some, in despair fled towards Emmaus (Lk. xxiv);

—some women embalmed the body to protect it from corruption.

—the Apostles in fear, shut up in the Cenacle, refused to yield faith to the first news of the Resurrection.

Subsequently, however, they all testified that

2° *Jesus fulfilled His prophecy in Himself.*

He really died—in fact—the statement of His executioners themselves—specialists in the matter, is assurance of this. However, for greater precaution, one of them pierced the side of the Crucified with his lance. It was John, an eye-witness, who reported this.

Common sense, moreover, confirms it. How, after fifteen hours of torture, the scourging, the three hours on the Cross, the wound in the side, could the body of Jesus wrapped in winding cloth and shut up in a tomb, have resisted asphyxiation from the spices wherewith He was embalmed?

Therefore He truly rose, for

(a). Many witnesses saw Him living.

Yes, many—not one, poor, nervous, sick woman, but a great number of men and women; not once but often during forty days.

They are:—the holy women who return to the tomb to complete the burial needs.

—the Apostles, Peter, James, Thomas, the whole group gathered in the Cenacle.

—the Disciples: the two pilgrims who left Jerusalem now an accursed city, the 500 witnesses of Tiberias.

(b). It is no phantom they have before them.

Jesus speaks to them and reassures them. "It is I; fear not" (Lk. xxiv).

He shares their repast (Lk. xxiv).

He makes them touch His wounded body: "See My hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Handle and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see Me to have" (Lk. xxiv, 39).

And as one of them still doubts: "Put in thy finger hither, and see My hands; and bring hither thy hand and put it into my side" (Jn. xx, 27).

(c). Moreover, the tomb is found empty on the third day.

Could the body have been taken away? Who then could be guilty of the theft?

—The Jews? Evidently not. They would have been only too delighted to stop the victorious preaching of the Apostles by exhuming the body of the Crucified, proof of imposture.

—The Disciples? They would have been too frightened these cowards; who for several weeks remained hidden "through fear of the Jews!" And would they then have allowed themselves to be put to death rather than announce the risen Christ?

Finally in order to rid themselves of these embarrassing witnesses, modern rationalists have had recourse to another hypothesis which despite their desires remains equally indefensible. Indeed, is it not clear that

(d). The Disciples were not the victims of a collective hallucination?

Of hallucination—these Apostles by nature so healthy, robust and realistic?

Of hallucination—these men whose testimony was so varied and repeated, so precise and coherent?

Of hallucination—these depressed men whose broken moral courage was so suddenly enlarged and overwhelmed?

No. It is best to admit that

(e). Their testimony is true and irrefutable; for to deny the historic value of the Gospels is to make them the work of falsifiers. But when they were published, witnesses of Jesus still were living and none of them protested. Moreover, this was scarcely 35 years after the death of Christ, according to Harnack, an authority scarcely to be suspected of exaggeration.

Moreover, even were the Gospels lacking other documents were not:

—The Epistles of St. Paul—the authenticity of which no one today rejects as a whole—make the Resurrection “one of the pivots of their theology” (Renan).

—The Acts of the Apostles are filled with statements like this: we “who did eat and drink with Him after He arose again from the dead” (Acts. x, 41); an assertion repeated even before the tribunals.

—The witnesses of the second century are innumerable. Irenaeus, Celsus himself in his own way, Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Ignatius of Antioch, etc.

—Finally, the blood of thousands of martyrs shed in defense of the Divinity of the risen Christ.

So with Pascal ought we not to believe “the stories of witnesses who give their lives?”

Without doubt then Jesus is truly risen!

Therefore He is God.

IV. He lives always as God and will never die.

He lives:

—In His Church to which He has promised an indefectible assistance (Jno. xv, 18; Mt. xvi, 28).

—In the Pope and Bishops: through them He promulgates His Divine message down the ages to the very ends of the earth.

—In the priest, through whom He absolves the penitent sinner.

—In the Faithful whom He calls incessantly to share more of the Divine life.

—In the Saints by means of whom He manifests

His power (Theresa of the Infant Jesus, the Curé d'Ars, etc.).

- In the whole of creation of which He is "the support," "the Keystone of the Arch," the Masterpiece, in whose image the world is fashioned" (Col. i).
- In the Eucharist, hidden beneath the veils of bread, but nevertheless, all-powerful (the miracles of Lourdes).
- In Heaven accomplishing His work as Intercessor and Redeemer (Hebr. vii).

He lives there forever acclaimed by all—Blessed: "Praise, honor and glory and power forever and ever!" (Apoc. v).

Jesus was truly the Son of God!
Jesus is the ever living God!

Gospel Narrative of Christ's Birth

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Taken originally from "Verbum Domini," and translated in the Mangalore "Trumpet Call."

1. THE Church, Christ's Spouse, who is so very like Christ's Mother in so many things, has also no little likeness with her in this respect, viz., that as Mary, Christ's Mother, lovingly and diligently stored up in her heart the Gospel of Christ's childhood, so the Church, the Spouse of Christ, laid up and lays up the same Gospel likewise in her heart with love and diligence. Nay more, that saying of Luke, so applicable to the Church, has a fuller meaning which is really noteworthy; for she, the mystic Bride of Christ, keeps and preserves as a most diligent custodian, all *these words* not only as facts and mysteries but also keeps and preserves most faithfully the very words and sounds, yes, even the soft notes and syllables and letters in the same fact and mysteries: and while retaining faithfully the sounds and letters of the Gospel narrative, she preserves with equal fidelity the feelings and thoughts and affections.

2. The object of this paper is to manifest this twofold fidelity of the Church (both in preserving the *words* of the Gospel and in retaining the *sense and meaning* of the same).

3. Holy Mother Church is one with such strict unity that she will not permit any other to be acknowledged as the true Spouse of Christ save herself, and is Catholic with such wide universality that she deems and proclaims herself to be the mother of all peoples and nations. Hence, as the most universal and truly *Catholic* mother, she both acknowledges and loves the languages of all her children; and she delights to hear that the Gospel narratives are translated into their own tongues. Moreover, she is mighty glad when she most faithfully retains Latin, the most ancient language and most devoutly repeats it in her liturgical offices.

4. Our attention is drawn in a special way chiefly to this Latin translation *Old and Vulgate*, and *tried by the long use of so many centuries in the Church*, so that we wonder at the diligence of the Church in preserving the Gospel narrative of the Birth of Christ our Lord.

The value of the perusal of the Vulgate is most clearly seen if it is critically compared with the original Greek text; for from that comparison it follows that not only the Vulgate edition faithfully echoes the original text, but is also heightened with that paradoxical praise that the Latin reading certainly equals today's Greek text in critical accuracy, nay, it seems perhaps to excel in some points (e. g. verses 14 and 15, against verses 2 and 8).

5. It is owing to this critical correction and perfection of the Latin text that we can know and determine in the Latin version almost all the notes of the style and language which are in the original text.

And chiefly the Hebrew or Aramaic elegance and color (as it is called):

Factum est . . . exiit = Egeneto . . . exelthen (Greek) vv. 2, 1, 6, 15.

Et = kai almost always as a conjunctive particle (except *de* 4, 6, 19; *dia* 4; *dioti* 7; *oti* 11). Hence it follows that there are hardly subordinate propositions: (except 2, 15; and to a certain extent 17, 18); as the conversation and narration goes on almost continually with propositions joined to the corresponding copulative conjunction *kai*.

6. Many phrases derived from Aramaic source, undoubtedly make their origin known: *exiit edictum* v. 1, cfr. Dn. 2, 13; *impleti sunt dies* v. 6; *dies for tempus*; *timuerunt timore magno* (better in Greek *timuerunt timorem magnum*) so that we say in graceful language (*beldurtu ziran beldurtu*) connecting the past tense with the infinite.

Add the parallelism in v. 14; though it would be more perfect in the original Aramaic phrase than it appears in the translations.

Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will.

Where by a strict parallelism *peace* corresponds to *glory*; *earth* to *in the highest*; i. e., men pleasing to God and, therefore, dear to God.

Finally note Greek and Latin words used in Hebrew sense; as *verbum* = *rema* vv. 15, 17, 19.

7. Let this suffice to have remarked about Hebrew elegance and color; but it moreover helps to point out even briefly the variant readings; and by showing them the value and correction of our text become clearer.

Therefore, as regards the number of variant readings, a certain Von Soden¹ in these twenty verses reckoned, in the Greek text (wherein there are not more than 120 words), more than 165 different ones.

When one, uninitiated in critical science, hears of this number, one will fancy that the text is wholly corrupt; but when one learns that the variants are almost all of the least importance (e. g., v. 4 *de civitate Nazareth* = *a Nazareth civitate* = *Nazaret* v. 7; in *præsepio* in Greek some add the article while others omit it, etc.), that none borders upon dogma even in the least manner, nay, that they do not even change the meaning, one will understand with what fidelity God has willed that not only the narrative itself, but also the original words in the Greek text equivalent to the original words in Latin should be handed down to us.

8. We shall, therefore, explain more clearly this text of the Gospel narrative of Christ's Birth, so clearly preserved, in the light of the Greek version and the excellence of the text itself.

¹Von Soden, Hermann *Die Schriften des N. T.*, Vol. II, pp. 240-242; Gottingen, 1913.

The Gospel narrative is divided into two parts (clearly distinct), of which *Christ's Birth* itself is contained in the first (Luke ii, 1-7) and in the second (ii, 8-20) the *adoration of the Shepherds*; and for the present we shall consider only the first part restricted only to seven verses; by which (a) both the cause or occasion of the Birth in Bethlehem (ii, 1-5), and (b) the Birth itself are narrated (vv. 6 and the following).

9. Let us come to each verse. Verse 1. *Factum est autem in diebus illis, exiit edictum a Cæsare Augusto ut describeretur universus orbis*.—"And it came to pass that, in those days there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled."

Historically the existence of a certain *mandatory decree* (*edicti iussionis*, in Greek *dogma*) of Cæsar Octavian Augustus is solemnly asserted; which has certainly not been proved or demonstrated up to this by any positive extra-biblical document; nevertheless in its confirmation most certain facts may be adduced from the life of the same Cæsar Augustus affirming that both *Rationarium* or *Rationes Imperii*, and *Breviarium Imperii* and *Indices rerum gestarum* were composed by the order of the Emperor. Of these the first and the second presuppose that censuses or enrollments (*descriptiones*) were taken, while the third expressly asserts the enrollment of the Roman citizens.²

The whole world (*universus orbis*, Greek *oikoumene*, *terra inhabitata*) the inhabited world or the world in which men had their dwelling places; it is meant the world inhabited by the Greeks or the Romans which was Greek by culture and civilization, and Roman by political constitution, inasmuch as its different parts were subject to or associated with the Roman Empire; the word used metonymically in this place, means the inhabitants of those regions.

Verse 2. *Hæc descriptio prima facta est a præside Syriæ Cyrino*—"This enrolling was first made by Cyrinus, the governor of Syria."

10. The notice is contained in these words, added from Aramaic sources out of the personal experience of St. Luke, who wished to bring out the historical narration of events and of chronology. The matter is about profane

²Cfr. O'Rourke, *Census Quirinii* in *Verbum Domini* I (1921), 296-211.

history; but the form is of classical Greek style, bringing out the difference of time by the absolute genitive *hegemoneuontos tes Surias Kureniou, præsides Cyrino*, i. e., when Cyrinus ruled over Syria. Hence the Latin preposition *a* is omitted both from the Greek grammatical form and the original word *egeneto*.

This as far as the language goes; as for the historical fact itself, it is proved also from extra-biblical documents that Cyrinus was governor of Syria; so can similar documents be brought forward for the fact itself of the *first enrolling, primæ descriptionis*. Nor is anything known from history by which the contrary can be proved.

Verse 3. *Et ibant omnes ut profiterentur singuli in suam civitatem*—"And all went to be enrolled, everyone into his own city."

11. It seems that the Gospel assertion ought to be restricted to those provinces or regions and kingdoms over which the authority of Cyrinus extended; and chiefly (as appears from the context) over Galilee, Samaria and Judea. The enrolling is, of course, shown as made after the manner of the Jews, and not of the Romans. According to the latter everyone was to be enrolled in that city, where he had obtained *the city* (namely the rights of a Roman citizen) by birth or merits or money. But among the Jews (from the very constitution and nature of the people) everyone was to be enrolled in that city where he had the paternal, or rather ancestral house, or that of origin.

Verse 4. *Ascendit autem et Joseph a Galilæa de civitate Nazareth in Iudæam in civitatem David, quæ vocatur Bethlehem: eo quod esset de domo et familia David*—"And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; because he was of the house and family of David."

12. The terminus *a quo* and the terminus *ad quem* of the journey of Joseph and Mary are marked: the former is fixed in the Galilean province, in the small town of Nazareth; the latter in the Judean province in the more famous town of Bethlehem. Nay in the most famous town, inasmuch as it was "a little one among the thousands of Juda"—*minimum cum fuisset in millibus Juda* (Mich. v, 2). It was not to be called a little one as it brought forth David, who ruled God's people Israel. If, therefore, it was

not to be called "a little one"—*non minima*—truly it had to be said by no means a little one—*nequaquam minima*—because "the city of David"—*civitas David*—was turned into "the city of Jesus"—*civitas Iesu*. It has, therefore, been on this account rightly declared:

O sola *magnarum urbium*
maior Bethlem, cui contigit
 Ducem salutis cælitus
 incorporatum gignere . . .

St. Joseph, who by origin is of David's family, is shown to set out to this city; since it is stated *de domo et familia David*—"of the house and family of David"; keeping the Hebrew idea of the constitution of the society: for the Hebrew *society* (or rather people) were divided³ into tribes, tribes into classes or families, a family into a house, a house into individuals.

Verse 5. *Ut profiteretur cum Maria desponsata sibi uxore prægnante*—"to be enrolled with Mary, his espoused wife, who was with child."

13. *Profiteri* (Gr. *apographesthai*), *perscribi in tabulas publicas* to register (for census) the resources, property and income. This word which (in v. 2) was put in the passive form, is here (v. 5) used in the middle form; for it treats about St. Joseph enrolling himself or submitting his proper name and proper civil marks to the Roman authorities.

Desponsata uxor, "espoused wife"—if these words are taken in a literal sense, they are contrary in some measure and opposed to each other; but undoubtedly written by St. Luke deliberately and under the light of Divine inspiration, so that no less honor might be attributed to the most chaste Virgin than to the most pure Spouse. For if these words and all epithets and appellative names which are found in St. Matthew and St. Luke as applied to Mary and Joseph, are all taken together, a twofold truth is seen to be declared with equal simplicity and sublimity and with like clearness and precision, one more glorious than the other for both the most pure spouses (Joseph and Mary): namely the *virgin conception of the Saviour*, and a *true wedlock* between Joseph and Mary. The virgin concep-

³Ios. vii, 14, 16-18.

tion of the Saviour is the seal for Mary's Divine motherhood, the root of all her prerogatives; and the virgin wedlock with Mary is the source for St. Joseph both of his own superexcellent dignity and of supereminent holiness befitting his dignity.

Verse 6. *Factum est autem cum essent ibi, impleti sunt dies ut pareret*—"It came to pass that when they were there, her days were accomplished that she should be delivered."

14. Chronology and topography are styled the two lights of history; and the Birth of Christ is illumined in this verse by the rays of their lights: *cum essent ibi*—"when they were there"—behold the topography; *impleti sunt dies*—"her days were accomplished"—lo! chronology. *Ibi* (Gk. *ekei*), directly indeed points out the town of Bethlehem; but indirectly the pious reader may consider also that place which the evangelist does not so much describe in the following verse as leaves us to form it in our mind and fancy. *Impleti sunt dies*, "her days were accomplished," assuredly those days, and weeks, and months, during which the human body is formed in the maternal womb by the physiological law of nature; during which the virginal body of Jesus is formed in the virginal womb of Mary through Divine dispensation and the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, *factum ex muliere*,⁴ "made of a woman." Therefore, *impleti sunt dies illi*, "her days were accomplished," that time; but besides other days were accomplished and other time, which the Apostle with deep insight termed the fullness of time, *temporum plenitudinem*.⁵

Verse 7. *Et peperit filium suum primogenitum, et pannis eum involvit et posuit eum in præsepio: quia non erat eis locus in diversorio*—"And she brought forth her first-born son and wrapped him up in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger: because there was no room for them in the inn."

15. The verse or versicle is equivalent to a whole theological treatise or many treatises, inasmuch as it contains in itself both dogmatic assertions truly noteworthy, and ascetical teachings which deserve deep consideration: (a) For therein are dogmatically asserted both the physical and real motherhood of Mary in relation to Jesus (Gr.)

⁴Gal. iv, 4.

⁵*Ibid.*

eteken ton uion autes, and the human nature of Jesus received from Mary (Gr.) *ton uion autes ton prototokon*; (b) Likewise we are taught ascetically both the greatest lowliness and deepest humiliations of the newly-born child, and the contempt and humility of the parents themselves, since they could not find even the most obscure corner in that smallest of inns.

16. It might be well to explain everything at greater length.

(a) Dogmatical assertions openly make known both the Divine motherhood of Mary and the human filiation of Christ. To assert both it would have sufficed (Gk. *eteken uion*), *peperit filium* ("brought forth a son"); but St. Luke wished to add the article (*ton uion*, "the son already conceived"), that son already known, from the foretelling of the angel made to Mary. Moreover, he wished to add *ton uion autes*, her son (*filium eius*) in the feminine gender; *autes, illius* (of her) . . . namely of that Virgin so that he was of her *alone, illius solius*, who truly remained at the same time mother and virgin both in conceiving and bringing him forth: *gaudia matris habens cum virginitatis honore*—"having the joys of a mother joined with the dignity of a virgin." Again *ton prototokon* with the article, *primogenitum eius*, such a one who is "said to open the womb" in Holy Writ *aperire valvam dicitur* (Luke ii, 23; Ex. xiii, 2; Num. viii, 16); namely that one, who in the garden of the house has the dignity of a budding flower in the first place, without, however, either affirming or denying if such a primacy will afterwards yield more flowers or sons.

17. (b) Ascetical teachings: *pannis eum involvit . . . reclinavit eum in præsepio* (more correctly than *posuit*); *quia non erat eis locus in diversorio*—"wrapped him up in swaddling clothes . . . laid him up in swaddling clothes; because there was no room for them in the inn."

This great humility and unsuitableness in the new-born Jesus really made an impression on the cultured and noble mind of St. Luke (a physician, an Asiatic by birth, and a Greek by refinement); and it affected and moved him so deeply that within the short space of ten verses, inspired from above, he thrice returned to that humility and unsuitableness (Luke ii, 7, 12, 16). Indeed, in his triple reiteration of the phrase is shown the kindness of not only of St. Luke; it exhibits rather the most tender bowels of

mercy of the *Virgin Mother*, of that Virgin, I say, who is the most pure virgin, who with her most chaste hands wrapped up the infantile body—the most virginal of human bodies—with poor swaddling clothes, as she was poor, of that most loving of all mothers, who laid the most amiable of sons up in the most wretched manger, as she could not have even the poorest cradle.

18. In these circumstances really worthy of admiration (in the midst of so much lowliness and humility on one side and of so much and such great joy and honors on the other), how pleasant and delightful it is for the pious heart to add also the father to the son and mother . . . to Jesus and Mary, to associate also Joseph . . . *ibi* (Gk. *ekei*) “there”; in that most lowly place, then, but so glorious now, that it has become an inexhaustible source of most pure happiness and Heavenly joy to all men.

The Church acknowledges it, nay, the whole world owns it, directing all eyes, hearts and minds every year to the grotto, where the silvery star (the polar star, as it were, of human history), continually repeating and ever intimating the first evangelization of the angels in all history, says:

HIC
de Virgine Maria
Iesus Christus
natus est.

A Christmas Gift to Christ

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Fear not: for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people: for this day is born to you in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: you shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. Luke ii, 10-12.

YOU have just heard the simple story of the first Christmas. It is a story that never grows old. Its yearly recital sweeps us back (through the years) to the days of infancy, when nestling close in the arms of a loving mother, we begged again and again to be told about the Birth of the little Jesus.

He, whose coming had been foretold by the prophets, who was the Expected of the nations, for whom the Jews in particular were yearning, who they thought would deliver them from the Roman yoke, making of them a great people, on this night, two thousand years ago, was born in an abandoned cattle-shed. On this night, two thousand years ago, His heavenly Father sent angels to proclaim to the world that there had been born in Bethlehem the Christ, the Anointed One, the Saviour. On this night, two thousand years ago, the announcing angels passed by the palace of the sinful Herod, Tetrarch of Judea. The banqueters, too sleepy with wine, would not be able to understand their message or to appreciate the symphony of the heavenly choir; but on this night, two thousand years ago, at God's command the angels came to the poor, the simple, the clean of heart—to shepherds, who on the hillside of Bethlehem, were keeping the night watch over their sheep.

"And behold, an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone round them; and they feared with a great fear. And the angel said to them: 'Fear not: for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy that shall be to all the people: for this day is born to you in the City of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: you shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God, and saying: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will.'"

Dazed by the brightness, thrilled by the sweet symphony, for a moment the shepherds stood in wonderment, then with one accord they said to one another: "Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that has come to pass, which the Lord has showed us." The inspired story-teller tells us that they came with haste: and they found Mary and Joseph and the Infant lying in a manger. And seeing they understood of the word that had been spoken to them concerning this child.

How we envy those shepherds, how often we wish that we were of their number, that we were there to see the multitude of the heavenly army, to be blinded by the brightness of God, to have heard the angelic choir, to have hurried over to Bethlehem.

You, my dear people, are like the shepherds. Your

hearts are clean, as were theirs; your labors are as monotonous, as were theirs; your days are as laborious, as were theirs. In the Gospels, during the season of Advent, you have heard that the King was coming; the call of your priests, "Make straight the way of the Lord," has not fallen on deaf ears. By your sacrifices and denials; by your penance and mortification; by your sincere confession you have made ready for the coming of the Infant King. This night you have kept the night watch, waiting for the creeping hands of the clock, and the ringing of the church bell to warn you that it was time to hurry over to Bethlehem—the New Bethlehem—the Greater Bethlehem. Kneeling before the crib, you saw the same scene which the shepherds saw, Saint Joseph, the Virgin Mother—in the center of the tableaux, with arms extended wide, inviting all to come to Him, you saw a little baby. A baby—I say to you; you saw more than a baby, you saw a baby king, a baby God.

Oh! Envy not the shepherds. Yours is a wonderful grace; a proud privilege. Here in this temple of God, fittingly adorned for the reception of a great king, mid strains of heavenly music, in the dazzling brightness of a thousand lights, you will witness the birth of God in the hands of the priest; you will be the first to bend the knee in adoration as He is held aloft; while your God and my God is lying there on the crib of the Altar Table, you will continue pledging to your new-born God and King, your homage and your allegiance.

Ah! my dear friends, when the new-born God is being reverently carried to you as you approach the Holy Table, when you place Him in the spotless crib of your hearts, when you take Him away with you, when you have in your souls the happiness and joy and peace which He has come to give—how the shepherds will envy you then.

Tonight kneeling before the crib, you saw the outstretched arms of the Infant King inviting all to come to Him. "Come to Me," He says, "all you who labor and are heavily burdened and I will refresh you." Those tiny arms, which can hold the world in the hollow of the hand, are reaching out to all; to the rich, to the poor, to the joyful, to the sorrowful, above all, they are stretching out to the sinner, as a proof and as a pledge that the offense, however great, has been forgiven. "I have come," He tells us, "to call the sinner to repentance."

There is not one among you with a heart so devoid of affection as to be able to resist the appeal in the outstretched arms of a little child. You have often felt the magic of this power. You are acquainted with this touchstone which can turn into wax the hardest heart. Do you know of anyone, blighted though he be with sin, who will spurn the little child whose outstretched arms bespeak love and trust and confidence?

Since such is the magic power in the outstretched arms of a human child; what then, think you, is the power in the outstretched arms of the baby God? You will not resist the appeal of His all-embracing, all-inviting arms. You will not turn away from the magnetic power of His pleading eyes. You will not deafen your ear to His invitation to come and take Him in your arms.

Bending down to Him humbly, taking Him up tenderly, press Him close, warm Him with your love. While holding Him close to your heart tell Him of your successes and your failures during the past year, of your trials and your triumphs, of your joys and your sorrows, of the good resolutions that you have broken, of the unending, wearying fight against sin. Tell Him all. Talk to Him as you talk to a child—simply, unaffectedly.

While nestling there contentedly in your loving embrace He will ask you for a gift; He will implore you to give Him a Christmas present; He will beg again for that which He wants so much, for which He is ever pleading, for which He is ever longing. You will hear Him whisper: "Son, give Me your heart."

To the infant, but infinite, God give the heart broken by sorrow and care, the heart, once stained with sin, now washed cleaner than snow with penance and tears. Your heart is the present that He wants today, your heart is the present that will please Him today, your heart is the present that you will give Him today.

I can see Him then in His heavenly court, surrounded by saints and angels, holding your heart in His Divine hands, turn to the Virgin Mother, to Mary, Mediatrix of all graces; I hear Him say: "Mother, see this heart. It is broken with sorrow and care. We must mend it and console it with grace. Mother, see the beauty of this heart, which has been washed with penance and tears." I hear Him say: "These people are so generous—they have given

Me their hearts. We will not be outdone in generosity. In My treasure house of infinite merit there are innumerable blessings and graces. Give to each and everyone to overflowing. Take away their sorrows and their cares. Console them in their troubles. Aid them in their temptations. Above all, give them this day that peace which I came to give; that peace which the world and things of earth cannot give. Make them happy this Christmas Day, by filling their souls with peace and joy."

As you leave His sacred presence, enriched with graces and blessings, I see Him turn to His Foster-father; I hear Him say: "Saint Joseph, My guardian and Mother Mary's, watch over these good people who have given Me their hearts. Guard them, protect them in their journey through life. Be with them always till they come to their true home. Frustrate the efforts of My enemies who lie in wait to rob them of the wealth of grace and joy and peace which I have given them."

Such a gift guarded by Saint Joseph, coming through the hands of the Virgin Mother, given by God Himself—what joy, what happiness, what peace should it not bring to your souls today; how it will make this Christmas stand out in your memories, like the star in the heavens on that first Christmas night, bright with that spirit of peace which the Infant God and King has come on earth to spread, that spirit of peace proclaimed by the angels to men of good will; that spirit of peace which was poured into the souls of the shepherds, as prostrate before Him, they pledged their homage and their allegiance. That same spirit of peace is yours today, if you, like the shepherds of old, bowing down before the baby God in homage and adoration, do but accept His invitation to take Him in your arms; if you do but answer His pleading voice: "Son, give Me your heart."